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ABSTRACT

This paper considers how to determine leadership characteristics when selection committees conduct a search for a college or university president. It is based on the premise that specific psychological orientations, levels of consciousness, and motivations conducive to successful leadership in higher education can be identified. Search Committees are urged to look at candidates' ingrained ways of perceiving, behaviors, methods of interpreting information, and motivations. Committees might consider developing a psychological instrument specific to measuring candidates' perception of self-worth, worth of others, values, experience and perceptions concerning power, and the process of working with subordinates. Transactional Analysis is offered as one paradigm for such an effort. Specific neurotic psychological orientations that Committees should be aware of include the paranoid, compulsive, dramatic, depressive, and schizoid personality. Strategies for observing and examining behavior should be evaluated carefully, however, eliminating any immoral or illegal strategies. Other observations that should be made concern courtesy, overall demeanor, nervousness, and the questions asked prior to the interview. Contains 10 references. (GLR)

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WHO SHOULD LEAD?

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About twenty years ago, Harry Levinson, then president of Levinson Institute and adjunct professor in the College of Business and Administration at Boston University, wrote an article entitled, "Asinine attitudes toward motivation" (1973). Levinson discusses the "great jackass fallacy" in this article and affirms that many managers possess unconscious assumptions about people which influence how they interact with others and their assumptions about motivation. Twenty years, and several generations later, educational institutions are just beginning to examine the assumptions of their leaders and programs of study.

Oftentimes, it is the interaction between administrative styles, governance, and campus climate that becomes the institution's personality: an amalgam of traits, attitudes, values and priorities set by top level administrators who lead by their psychological orientations (conscious and unconscious conceptualizations) more than their strategic plans.

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Interactions involving administrative style have been used to explain why some colleges and universities forge ahead, celebrate diversity and implement initiatives that respond to the educational needs of specific populations, and why others are fraught with inefficiency, high staff turnover, low morale and/or only marginal student achievement. The psychological orientations of the president, and/or key administrators, manifest themselves in observable interactions or transactions.

In the Effective College President, Fisher, Tack and Wheeler (1988) affirm that "there is no real question in anyone's mind that strong, effective leadership, particularly at the presidential level, is essential to ensure a positive future for higher education today" (1). In their investigation of the college presidency, the authors attempt to uncover characteristics of administrative style that lead to effective presidencies and effective educational organizations.

After studying 412 American college presidents, Fisher, Tack, and Wheeler proffer that effective presidents possess 1) a clear vision that they communicate passionately to their universities and external communities, 2) visibility both on and off campus, 3) good interpersonal skills, 4) the ability to earn respect and administration from faculty staff and students, 5) decisiveness, 6) the ability to use power well, 7) a

reputation as being trusting and trustworthy, 8) a sense of humor, 9) a shared sense of governance, and 10) belief in the underlying goals of the institution.

Similarly, Gilley, Fulmer and Reithlingshoefer, In Searching for Academic Excellence (1986) found that high level leadership was extremely important in attaining excellence in all institutions. More importantly, the president was the "key factor in the forward movement of every institution" (12). The president implemented his/her vision with a strong team that was encouraged to exercise initiatives. The upper administration in the successful institutions studied by the authors made it known that individuals make a difference. After interviewing the students, faculty and staffs of these 20 institutions, the authors found that these presidents had similar characteristics. They were 1) persons with visionary intelligence, "idea people," 2) opportunity conscious, "opening the door before opportunity knocks," 3) accessible and visible on campus, utilizing formal and informal sources of information, 4) good at listening and able to have their ideas challenged, 5) good at delegating, and 6) compassionate persons who cared for their faculty and students.

Leadership characteristics of successful presidents, it would

appear, are manifestations of psychological orientations which include deeply ingrained ways of perceiving, interpreting and behaving. How do search committees measure candidates' psychological orientations? What evidence beyond the candidate's presentation or references should be examined to select chief academic administrators? What combination of psychological orientations, organizational strategy, decision making and group interactions are more likely to be present in dysfunctional educational institutions?

This article is about how we determine who should lead. It is based on the premise that identifiable psychological orientations, levels of consciousness, and motivations are more conducive to successful leadership in higher education. While this analysis is for the most part conceptual, it is based on empirical data about college presidents and the assumption that a healthy personality (or psychological orientation), which is manifested in clear and appropriate transactions, is essential for successful college leadership.

Selection and Screening of College Presidents and CEO's

In most cases, it takes from six months to a year to select and hire a college president. Most of this time, however, is utilized in the mechanics of selecting a search committee, placing advertisements, checking references and scheduling interviews. During the initial stages of the hiring process, both the board and the hiring committee offer utterances about the kind of person necessary to advance the college's mission or to focus on specific priorities and initiatives. The standard selection and screening process involves agreeing on desirable qualifications, reviewing possibly hundreds of applications and nominations, sorting qualified's from unqualified's, checking references, seeking unsolicited references, inviting candidates to campus for interviews with various constituencies, and making a recommendation to the board concerning desirable candidates. The board, then, designs some type of interview or presentation in which the candidates are further examined.

The aforementioned process has had successes and failures. The process, even when delivered with good intentions and precision, does not delve deeply into at least two important dimensions of leadership: motivation and psychological orientation. When trying to ascertain

candidates' interpersonal skills, the manner in which they handle power, and their likely responses to future challenges, a close examination of the candidates' psychological orientations and motivations is imperative. Too many times, after the president has been hired, members of search committees have proclaimed, "That certainly did not come out in the interview," "None of the references mentioned a problem with handling power or the potential for one," or "If we had known then what we know now, we would never have..."

The typical qualifications presented in advertisements, for college presidents of comprehensive institutions, in publications like The Chronicle of Higher Education include an earned doctorate or appropriate terminal degree, administrative and teaching experience in higher education, evidence of administrative experience, financial management and collective bargaining skills, effective communication skills, demonstrated leadership, and ability to communicate and inspire others towards the institution's mission. These qualifications often invite superficial considerations of candidates focusing on experiences performed, interviewing skills, grooming and overall appearance, body language, the "right answers" concerning real and hypothetical problems,

and the perceptions of the interviewing committee and board concerning the type of president the institution needs, after the experiences of the last presidency. Typical qualifiers are useful benchmarks for determining minimal "skills" needed, because they usually represent easier measurable abilities. It is not clear, however, beyond interview skill and checking with references how personal interaction skills can be measured, compared, and analyzed. While experience with budgets, collective bargaining units, teaching, and scholarship can be observed, counted and revealed, rarely does the search and screening of a candidate involve the examination of the candidate's way of viewing and interacting with the world beyond that discernible in the interviews, presentation, and checking of references.

It is not uncommon even for a member of the board or a subcommittee of the interviewing committee to visit the candidate's campus and still not uncover crucial information concerning the candidate's psychological orientation. If disturbing information is exposed, less value is placed on observations concerning interpersonal communications skills; conflicts with subordinates can be misconstrued to demonstrate firmness or decisiveness.

A basic assumption in this article is that search and screening committees need to probe into underlying basic psychological orientations of the top candidates and ascertain, as much as possible, the candidate's awareness of his/her underlying assumptions and the effects of these assumptions (or life scripts: patterns of thinking, interacting, and reacting developed early in life) on personal interactions and decisions that affect people. For further consideration of underlying ego states and their relationship to leadership, transactional analysis, the analysis of stimulus and response, has been used as a frame of reference for ensuing discussions. It should be noted, however, that other paradigms could be equally useful in probing into candidates' psychological orientations. Transactional analysis, has been selected because of the degree of fit between this paradigm, the author's own frame of reference, and its usefulness in examining observable behavior. Whatever paradigm selected, it should provide insights into a candidate's feeling of self-worth, his/her perception of the worth of others, interpretations, and his/her actions.

The author's development of psychological orientation concept has

been influenced by Eric Berne (Games People Play, 1964), Abe Wagner (Transactional Manager, 1981), Thomas Harris (I'm OK - You're OK, 1967), Manfred Kets de Vries & Danny Miller (The Neurotic Organization, 1984) , and Susan Forward (Toxic Parents, 1989). Berne and Wagner define four basic psychological orientations or frames of reference which describe a person's feeling of inherent worth and the worth of others. These four frames of reference have been identified as I'm OK, you're OK; I'm OK, you're not OK; You're OK, I'm not OK; and I am not OK, and you're not OK. Healthy interactions tend to flow from the I'm OK, you're OK position. Individuals operating from this frame of reference value themselves and others and believe in the basic worth and potential of others. Their interactions with others would stem from self-assurance. Harris, a student of Eric Berne, maintains that I'm Not OK, you're OK is the first position dominant in early childhood. For some, this feeling of inferiority is never lost; decisions and personal interactions are based on this mostly unconscious position. Persons operating from this I'm Not OK, you're OK position are often haunted by feelings of diminished self-worth and/or a constant need for the approval of others.

Conflicts tend to highlight the frame of reference from which individuals operate. An examination of patterns involving decisions and

the quality of interactions between an candidate and others in a crisis or problem situation can provide evidence that would substantiate claims in interviews that conflicts are resolved in a cooperative and caring manner. A screening committee, thus, needs to identify patterns of behavior within moral and legal bounds. Berne and Harris' discussion of the parent, adult and child levels of interacting in any given situation can be helpful for examining the answers given in interview situations. Habitual behavioral patterns that lead towards devaluation or destruction of self or others should be considered very carefully.

In Transactional Manager, Abe Wagner maintains that an individual's particular frame of reference stems from early experiences and interactions concerning the fulfillment of needs and wants. Susan Forward, in Toxic Parents, affirms that many adults are psychologically hooked to the "powerful and destructive influence" of their parents (10), causing them to engage in habitual behavior that limits and dictates interactions with others until the adult is able to "let go of the struggle" (323) and engage in healthier behavior.

Information provided by the candidate concerning the development of early life scripts can be helpful to search committees. Since these scripts are rarely "surface material" in most interviews or vita, the

difficulty of this task is not minimized. Failure to probe beyond the interview presence and the carefully crafted presentation has, in more cases than we would want to admit, resulted in the selection of a chief academic officer (president, chancellor, provost, etc.) whose psychological orientation, eventually discerned through interpersonal interactions, proves to be thoroughly incompatible with the pursuit of the institution's mission. Individuals operating around a life script which approximates the "I'm Not OK, or You're Not OK" orientations can have disastrous management effects. Likewise, leaders utilizing the child or parent mode in most interactions with faculty and staff will be equally problematic.

Examining unsuccessful presidencies can also provide valuable information for search and screening committees selecting presidents. We have all seen institutions, with seemingly efficient practices and personnel. A closer scrutiny, however, might reveal leaders whose transactions conceal hidden motivations and mask feelings of inadequacy or the need to manipulate and control. These hidden motivations often result in low morale, high staff turn over and highly dissatisfied staff. Those who attempt to bring attention to the effects of the transactions are then visibly sanctioned or punished. These institutions are managed

by intimidation and probably exhibit some of the following characteristics:

1) presidents insulate themselves with a handpicked group of top administrators who acquiesce to the president's demands and whims,

2) it becomes difficult for faculty and staff to determine which programs will be appropriately in line with the stated, and agreed upon mission

3) presidents and top administrators are preoccupied with the hierarchy and following a regimented set of policies and procedures

4) the president is aloof and unapproachable even to middle level administrators and students.

5) faculty and staff hesitate to bring forth "new" or "different" ideas or point to obvious discrepancies between institutional stated values and daily occurrences.

In the Neurotic Organization, Kets de Vries and Miller aver that the pervasiveness of dysfunctional organizations, even though overlooked in organizational theory, is discussed frequently in psychoanalytic and psychiatric literature. They identify five neurotic styles of leaders and how these styles affect the leader's ability to lead, the institutional climate, and the overall institutional effectiveness. Viewing Kets de Vries and Miller's neurotic styles through the transactional analysis

framework provides further insight for reviewing candidates' psychological orientations.

Paranoid Candidates with this psychological orientation will demonstrate (or will have demonstrated) a "you are not OK" attitude in their behaviors and personal interactions. The candidates will be suspicious of others, ready to mistrust others and their motives, and are extremely sensitive to what they perceive to be attacks or threats. These persons will tend to exhibit cold, unemotional, and tense behaviors when interacting with subordinates and colleagues. Discussions with subordinates from previous positions seem warranted when there is the possibility of this orientation being dominant.

Compulsive Candidates with this psychological orientation will probably exhibit excessive attention to detail even in the interview stage. These persons seek to hide their own "Not-OKness" by perfectionism, and an inordinate preoccupation with being in control. Compulsive persons also view interactions with others in terms of dominance and submission, and they are not comfortable with other

dominant persons, unless it is clear that they must be submissive because of the organizational hierarchy. Screening committees should look for behavior that demonstrates an extreme reliance on rules and regulations, lack of spontaneity, meticulous attention to detail, and an indication that working towards the big picture is, or could be, a problem.

Dramatic Candidates with this psychological orientation might appear extremely energetic, enthusiastic, and confident in interviews. These persons, however, seek attention for themselves, and seek to impress others for themselves, instead of promoting the educational institution (suggesting a Not OK belief about themselves). In their behaviors with others, they overreact and alternate between devaluing some and idealizing others. High energy demonstrated during an interview should be probed to determine the degree of superficiality, stability, and the need of the candidate to be the center of attention.

Depressive Candidates will, undoubtedly, attempt to suppress or mask this psychological orientation. Fundamental to this

orientation is an I'm Not OK stance. Persons feel worthless, unable to influence events, unable to become motivated, and an overall sense of helplessness. Search committees should question colleagues and previous supervisors to determine if this orientation is present among top candidates.

Schizoid Candidates with this psychological orientation may appear indifferent, unemotional, strangely detached from previous successes and failures, and slightly withdrawn during the entire screening/interview process. Committees should note the degree of detachment exhibited and the intensity of responses from references and colleagues from previous positions.

Kets de Vries and Miller postulate that many organizational problems stem from the psychological orientations of the leader or key leaders. Some seemingly intractable organizational problems, then, can only be altered by changing the behavior of the leader(s). Their investigations into how specific psychological orientations dictate behavior support the position that attitudes and behaviors of the chief executive officer should be examined in educational institutions. This

type of consideration is extremely time consuming, sensitive, and involves focusing on the past, present and future behaviors and fantasies of the leader(s). Likewise, study of successful college presidency can provide identifiable characteristics, behavioral patterns, and modes of interaction with faculty and staff that reinforce the institution's movement towards mission and goals.

Candidates with healthy psychological orientations will demonstrate a self-assured calmness to all campus constituencies. Such candidates stimulate others to act, publicly praise persons for successes, provide constructive assistance designed to guide individuals toward their personal and professional goals, and display a long-term interest in continuous institutional renewal and creativity. These candidates tend to stress the importance of the process as well as the result.

Conclusions

Psychological orientations are complex and often hidden in casual and formal encounters. The time utilized to search for, and select, a college president probably needs to be readjusted to allocate much more time for the examination of each candidate's ways of viewing. When probing into the lives of the finalists, focus should be on the ingrained

ways of perceiving, the behavior, method of interpreting information, and the motivations of the individuals being considered.

How can psychological orientations be identified? Search and Screening Committees might consider developing a psychological instrument for measuring the candidates' perception of self-worth, worth of others, values, experience and perceptions concerning power, and the process for working with subordinates. Considering the highly intelligent group seeking presidencies and other top level positions, this instrument should be constructed specifically for persons seeking high level positions in higher education by persons with experience in psychometry and reviewed by legal counsel. Such instruments could be piloted locally, regionally, and nationally to ascertain predictive validity.

The search and screening process should also provide an opportunity to orientate faculty and other university community representatives prior to beginning the screening and interviewing process. During this orientation, acceptable strategies for observing and examining behavior should be recommended. Illegal or immoral strategies should be clearly described and discouraged. Members of screening committees should examine candidates' relationships with present and past subordinates by

communicating directly with subordinates. Contact with the candidates' subordinates can provide insight into each candidate's perception of the worth of others, manner of handling power, and the process of accomplishing goals. This contact will probably be most valuable, if standardized questions are utilized for comparisons and attention to specific concepts.

Other activities that might prove helpful in examining candidates include closely examining the pre-interview interactions with the candidate and the institution. Observations concerning courtesy, overall demeanor, nervousness, and the questions asked prior to the interview can be valuable portals into the person's way of interacting in less formal and prescribed situations.

This article has attempted to suggest the depth needed in examining psychological orientations for high level positions in educational institutions. If educational institutions are going to meet the challenges of the 21st century, which includes responding quickly to the changing and diverse needs of our American society, it is important to select persons who can lead others toward personal excellence.

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